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LAPSUS CALAMI

Cambridge

**PRINTED BY C. J. CLAY M.A. AND SONS
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LAPSUS CALAMI

BY

J. K. S.

Stephen, James Kenneth

NEW EDITION

WITH CONSIDERABLE OMISSIONS AND ADDITIONS

Cambridge

MACMILLAN AND BOWES

1892.

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POST QUATUOR IAM LUSTRA DEPONENS TOGAM
IAM IAM FUTURUS RUSTICUS,
ALUMNUS OLIM, VILE CONSECRIO TIBI,
HENRICE REX, OPUSCULUM.

APUD JEMABAD,
id. Mart. mdcccxc.

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

MOST of the pieces comprised in this volume have appeared in one of various Eton, Cambridge and London papers. The curious in such matters can ascertain exact particulars by reference to the earlier editions. In the first two editions will be found numerous verses not included in the present volume: while the greater part of this volume is not included in them. The third edition is substantially the same as this.

J. K. S.

JEMABAD,

August, 1891.



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To C. S. C.

Oh, when the grey courts of Christ's College glowed
With all the rapture of thy frequent lay,
When printers' devils chuckled as they strode,
And blithe compositors grew loudly gay:
Did Granta realise that here abode,
Here in the home of Milton, Wordsworth, Gray,
A poet not unfit to cope with any
That ever wore the bays or turned a penny?

The wit of smooth delicious Matthew Prior,
The rhythmic grace which Hookham Frere displayed,
The summer lightning wreathing Byron's lyre,
The neat inevitable turns of Praed,
Rhymes to which Hudibras could scarce aspire,
Such metric pranks as Gilbert oft has played,
All these good gifts and others far sublimer
Are found in thee, beloved Cambridge rhymers.

And scholarship as sound as his whose name
 Matched thine (he lives to mourn, alas, thy death,
 And now enjoys the plenitude of fame,
 And oft to crowded audience lectureth,
 Or writes to prove religion is the same
 As science, unbelief a form of faith):—
 Ripe scholar! Virgil's self would not be chary
 Of praises for thy *Carmen Seculare*.

Whene'er I take my "pint of beer" a day,
 I "gaze into my glass" and think of thee:
 When smoking, after "lunch is cleared away,"
 Thy face amid the cloud I seem to see;
 When "that sweet mite with whom I used to play,"
 Or "Araminta," or "the fair Miss P."
 Recur to me, I think upon thy verses,
 Which still my beating heart and quench my curses.

Ah, Calverley! if in these lays of mine
 Some sparkle of thy radiant genius burned,
 Or were in any poem—stanza—line
 Some faint reflection of thy muse discerned:
 If any critic would remark in fine
 "Of C. S. C. this gentle art he learned;"
 I should not then expect my book to fail,
 Nor have my doubts about a decent sale.

To R. K.

As long I dwell on some stupendous
 And tremendous (Heaven defend us !)
 Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrendous
 Demoniaco-seraphic
 Penman's latest piece of graphic.

BROWNING.

Will there never come a season
 Which shall rid us from the curse
 Of a prose which knows no reason
 And an unmelodious verse :
 When the world shall cease to wonder
 At the genius of an Ass,
 And a boy's eccentric blunder
 Shall not bring success to pass :

When mankind shall be delivered
 From the clash of magazines,
 And the inkstand shall be shivered
 Into countless smithereens :
 When there stands a muzzled stripling,
 Mute, beside a muzzled bore :
 When the Rudyards cease from kipling
 And the Haggards Ride no more.

THE GRAND OLD PIPE.

I have ceased to believe in the Leader
Whom I loved in the days of my youth :
Is he, or am I the seceder ?
It were hard to determine the truth.
But my enmity is not impassioned :
I'll forgive and forget if I can,
And I'm smoking a pipe which is fashioned
Like the face of the Grand Old Man.

It was made in the days when his collars
Were still of the usual size,
And before the recipients of dollars
Were known as his trusted allies :
But I love, as I lounge in the garden,
Or work at my chambers, to gaze
At the face of the master of Hawarden,
As he was in the Grand Old Days.

My pipe was my one consolation
When its antitype kindled the flame
Which threatened the brave population
Of Ulster with ruin and shame :
I forgot that our ruler was dealing
With scamps of the Sheridan type,
While the true orange colour was stealing
O'er the face of my Grand Old Pipe.

Did his conduct grow ever absurder
 Till no remnant of reason seemed left?
 Did he praise the professors of murder?
 Does he preach the evangel of theft?
 When he urges our eloquent neighbours
 To keep other men's land in their gripe,
 Grows he black in his face with his labours?
 Well, so does my Grand Old Pipe.

For the sake of its excellent savour,
 For the many sweet smokes of the past,
 My pipe keeps its hold on my favour,
 Tho' now it is blackening fast:
 And, remembering how long he has striven,
 And the merits he used to possess,
 And his fall, let him now be forgiven,
 Though he has made a Grand Old Mess.

DRINKING SONG.

To A. S.*

There are people, I know, to be found,
Who say and apparently think
That sorrow and care may be drowned
By a timely consumption of drink.

Does not man, these enthusiasts ask,
Most nearly approach the divine
When engaged in the soul-stirring task
Of filling his body with wine?

Have not beggars been frequently known
When satisfied, soaked and replete,
To imagine their bench was a throne
And the civilised world at their feet?

Lord Byron has finely described
The remarkably soothing effect
Of liquor, profusely imbibed,
On a soul that is shattered and wrecked.

In short, if your body or mind
Or your soul or your purse come to grief,
You need only get drunk, and you'll find
Complete and immediate relief.

For myself, I have managed to do
Without having recourse to this plan,
So I can't write a poem for you,
And you'd better get someone who can.

* Who had asked for one, to set to music.

SINCERE FLATTERY.

I. *Of F. W. H. M.*

I. TO ONE THAT SMOKES.

Spare us the hint of slightest desecration,
Spotless preserve us an untainted shrine;
Not for thy sake, oh goddess of creation,
Not for thy sake, oh woman, but for mine.

2. To A. T. M.

See where the K., in sturdy self-reliance,
 Thoughtful and placid as a brooding dove
 Stands, firmly sucking, in the cause of science,
 Just such a peppermint as schoolboys love.

Suck, placid K.: the world will be thy debtor;
 Though thine eyes water and thine heart grow
 faint,

Suck: and the less thou likest it the better;
 Suck for our sake, and utter no complaint.

Near thee a being, passionate and gentle,
 Man's latest teacher, wisdom's pioneer,
 Calmly majestically monumental,
 Stands: the august Telepathist is here.

Waves of perception, subtle emanations,
 Thrill through the ether, circulate amain;
 Delicate soft impalpable sensations,
 Born of thy palate, quiver in his brain.

Lo! with a voice unspeakably dramatic,
 Lo! with a gesture singularly fine,
 He makes at last a lucid and emphatic
 Statement of what is in that mouth of thine.

II

He could detect that peppermint's existence,
He read its nature in the book of doom ;
Standing at some considerable distance ;
Standing, in fact, in quite another room.

Was there a faint impenetrable essence
Wafted towards him from the sucking K. ?
Did some pale ghost inform him of its presence ?
Or did it happen in some other way ?

These are the questions nobody can answer,
These are the problems nobody can solve ;
Only we know that Man is an Advancer :
Only we know the Centuries revolve.

II. *Of R. B.*

I. To A. S.

Birthdays? yes, in a general way;
 For the most if not for the best of men:
 You were born (I suppose) on a certain day:
 So was I: or perhaps in the night: what then?

Only this: or at least, if more,
 You must know, not think it, and learn, not speak:
 There is truth to be found on the unknown shore,
 And many will find where few will seek.

For many are called and few are chosen,
 And the few grow many as ages lapse:
 But when will the many grow few: what dozen
 Is fused into one by Time's hammer-taps?

A bare brown stone in a babbling brook:—
 It was wanton to hurl it there, you say:
 And the moss, which clung in the sheltered nook
 (Yet the stream runs cooler), is washed away.

That begs the question: many a prater
 Thinks such a suggestion a sound "stop thief!"
 Which, may I ask, do you think the greater,
 Sergeant-at-arms or a Robber Chief?

And if it were not so? still you doubt?
 Ah! yours is a birthday indeed if so.
 That were something to write a poem about,
 If one thought a little. I only know.

P.S.

There's a Me Society down at Cambridge,
 Where my works, *cum notis variorum*,
 Are talked about; well, I require the same bridge
 That Euclid took toll at as *Asinorum*:

And, as they have got through several ditties
 I thought were as stiff as a brick-built wall,
 I've composed the above, and a stiff one *it* is,
 A bridge to stop asses at, once for all.

2. THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

(From Her point of view.)

When I had firmly answered "No,"
 And he allowed that that was so,
 I really thought I should be free
 For good and all from Mr B.,

And that he would soberly acquiesce :
 I said that it would be discreet
 That for a while we should not meet ;
 I promised I would always feel
 A kindly interest in his weal ;
 I thanked him for his amorous zeal ;
 In short, I said all I could but "yes."

I said what I'm accustomed to ;
 I acted as I always do ;
 I promised he should find in me
 A friend,—a sister, if that might be :

But he was still dissatisfied :
 He certainly was most polite ;
 He said exactly what was right,
 He acted very properly,
 Except indeed for this, that he
 Insisted on inviting me
 To come with him for "one more last ride."

A little while in doubt I stood :
 A ride, no doubt, would do me good :
 I had a habit and a hat
 Extremely well worth looking at :

The weather was distinctly fine :
 My horse too wanted exercise,
 And time, when one is riding, flies :
 Besides it really seemed, you see,
 The only way of ridding me
 Of pertinacious Mr B. :

So my head I graciously incline.

I won't say much of what happened next :
 I own I was extremely vexed :
 Indeed I should have been aghast
 If any one had seen what passed :

But nobody need ever know
 That, as I leaned forward to stir the fire,
 He advanced before I could well retire,
 And I suddenly felt, to my great alarm,
 The grasp of a warm unlicensed arm,
 An embrace in which I found no charm ;
 I was awfully glad when he let me go.

Then we began to ride : my steed
 Was rather fresh, too fresh indeed,
 And at first I thought of little, save
 The way to escape an early grave,
 As the dust rose up on either side.
 My stern companion jogged along
 On a brown old cob both broad and strong :

He looked as he does when he's writing verse,
 Or endeavouring not to swear and curse,
 Or wondering where he has left his purse :
 Indeed it was a sombre ride.

I spoke of the weather to Mr B. :
 But he neither listened nor spoke to me :
 I praised his horse, and I smiled the smile
 Which was wont to move him once on a while ;
 I said I was wearing his favourite flowers :
 But I wasted my words on the desert air,
 For he rode with a fixed and gloomy stare :
 I wonder what he was thinking about :
 As I don't read verse, I sha'n't find out :
 It was something subtle and deep, no doubt,
 A theme to detain a man for hours.

Ah ! there was the corner where Mr S.
 So nearly induced me to whisper "yes" :
 And here it was that the next but one
 Proposed on horseback, or would have done,
 Had his horse not most opportunely shied ;
 Which perhaps was due to the unseen flick
 He received from my whip : 'twas a scurvy trick,
 But I never could do with that young man :
 I hope his present young woman can.
 Well, I must say, never, since time began,
 Did I go for a duller or longer ride.

He never smiles and he never speaks :
 He might go on like this for weeks :

He rolls a slightly frenzied eye
Towards the blue and burning sky,
 And the cob bounds on with tireless stride.
If we aren't at home for lunch at two
I don't know what Papa will do ;
But I know full well he will say to me
"I never approved of Mr B. :
"It's the very devil that you and he
 "Ride, ride together, for ever ride."

3. MIDSUMMER.

Persons at various times have said

That the hot dank steam of a sun-scorched day
Is a thing to thank God for: strike me dead
If I let such a falsehood lack its nay.

When Philip of Spain, or our own red Mary,
Desired to be rid of an impious man,
Did they *freeze* him to death? they were not so chary
Of man's worst weapon, the frying pan.

The fire, or the frying pan—well, the adage
Tells us the difference is but small,
And the fact remains that in that last bad age
When man had all torture-tricks at call,

They knew what was best and did it duly,
And broiled those most whom they loved the least.
Man, is it thou that hast proved unruly?
They are broiling thee, thou sinful beast.

Languid and frenzied, most despairing
When least's to despair at, such we grow,
When the sun's rays down on our heads, naught
sparing,

Burn and blister. I'd have you know

I have strung together these sad reflections
To prove to my tutor, a stern stark man,
That my chance of a decent place in collections
Drooped and died when the heat began.

III. *Of W. W. (Americanus).*

The clear cool note of the cuckoo which has ousted
the legitimate nest-holder,
The whistle of the railway guard despatching the
train to the inevitable collision,
The maiden's monosyllabic reply to a polysyllabic
proposal,
The fundamental note of the last trump, which is
presumably D natural;
All of these are sounds to rejoice in, yea to let
your very ribs re-echo with:
But better than all of them is the absolutely last
chord of the apparently inexhaustible pianoforte
player.

IV. *Of W. W. (Britannicus).*POETIC LAMENTATION ON THE INSUFFICIENCY OF
STEAM LOCOMOTION IN THE LAKE DISTRICT.

Bright Summer spreads his various hue
 O'er nestling vales and mountains steep,
 Glad birds are singing in the blue,
 In joyous chorus bleat the sheep.
 But men are walking to and fro,
 Are riding, driving far and near,
 And nobody as yet can go
 By train to Buttermere.

The sunny lake, the mountain track,
 The leafy groves are little gain,
 While Rydal's pleasant pathways lack
 The rattle of the passing train.
 But oh! what poet would not sing
 That heaven-kissing rocky cone,
 On whose steep side the railway king
 Shall set his smoky throne?

Helvellyn in those happy days
 With tunnelled base and grimy peak
 Will mark the lamp's approaching rays,
 Will hear the whistle's warning shriek:
 Will note the coming of the mails,
 And watch with unremitting stare
 The dusky grove of iron rails
 Which leads to Euston-square.

Wake, England, wake! 'tis now the hour
 To sweep away this black disgrace—
 The want of locomotive power
 In so enjoyable a place.
 Nature has done her part, and why
 Is mightier man in his to fail?
 I want to hear the porters cry,
 "Change here for Ennerdale!"

Man! nature must be sought and found
 In lonely pools, on verdant banks;
 Go, fight her on her chosen ground,
 Turn shapely Thirlmere into tanks:
 Pursue her to her last retreats,
 And if perchance a garden plot
 Is found among the London streets,
 Smoke, steam and spare it not.

Presumptuous nature! do not rate
 Unduly high thy humble lot,
 Nor vainly strive to emulate
 The fame of Stephenson and Watt.
 The beauties which thy lavish pride
 Has scattered through the smiling land
 Are little worth till sanctified
 By man's completing hand.

V. *Of T. G.*

ODE ON A RETROSPECT OF ETON COLLEGE.

Ye bigot spires, ye Tory towers,
 That crown the watery lea,
 Where grateful science still adores
 The aristocracy :
 A happy usher once I strayed
 Beneath your lofty elm trees' shade,
 With mind untouched by guilt or woe :
 But mad ambition made me stray
 Beyond the round of work and play
 Wherein we ought to go.

My office was to teach the young
 Idea how to shoot :
 But, ah ! I joined with eager tongue
 Political dispute :
 I ventured humbly to suggest
 That all things were not for the best
 Among the Irish peasantry :
 And finding all the world abuse
 My simple unpretending views,
 I thought I'd go and see.

I boldly left the College bounds :
 Across the sea I went,

To probe the economic grounds
 Of Irish discontent.
 My constant goings to and fro
 Excited some alarm ; and so
 Policemen girded up their loins,
 And, from his innocent pursuits,—
 Morose unsympathetic brutes,—
 They snatched a fearful Joynes.

Escaped, I speedily returned
 To teach the boys again :
 But ah, my spirit inly burned
 To think on Ireland's pain.
 Such wrongs must out : and then, you see,
 My own adventures might not be
 Uninteresting to my friends :
 I therefore ventured to prepare
 A little book, designed with care,
 To serve these humble ends.

Our stern head-master spoke to me
 Severely :—" You appear
 "*(Horresco referens)* to be
 " A party pamphleteer.
 " If you *must* write, let Caesar's page
 " Or Virgil's poetry engage
 " Your all too numerous leisure hours :
 " But now annihilate and quash
 " This impious philanthropic bosh :
 " Or quit these antique towers."

It seems that he who dares to write
Is all unfit to teach :
And literary fame is quite
Beyond an usher's reach.
I dared imprisonment in vain :
The little bantling of my brain
I am compelled to sacrifice.
The moral, after all, is this :—
That here, where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise.

VI. *Of Lord B.*

A GRIEVANCE.

Dear Mr Editor: I wish to say—

 If you will not be angry at my writing it—
 But I've been used, since childhood's happy day,
 When I have thought of something, to inditing it:
 I seldom think of things: and, by the way,
 Although this metre may not be exciting, it
 Enables one to be extremely terse,
 Which is not what one always is in verse.

I used to know a man,—such things befall

 The observant wayfarer through Fate's domain:
 He was a man, take him for all in all,

 We shall not look upon his like again:


I know that statement's not original:

 What statement is, since Shakspeare? or, since Cain,
 What murder? I believe 'twas Shakspeare said it, or
 Perhaps it may have been your Fighting Editor.

Though why an Editor should fight, or why
 A Fighter should abase himself to edit,
 Are problems far too difficult and high
 For me to solve with any sort of credit:
 Some greatly more accomplished man than I
 Must tackle them: let's say then Shakspeare said
 it:
 And, if he did not, Lewis Morris may
 (Or even if he did). Some other day,

When I have nothing pressing to impart,
 I should not mind dilating on this matter:
 I feel its import both in head and heart,
 And always did,—especially the latter:
 I could discuss it in the busy mart
 Or on the lonely housetop: hold! this chatter
 Diverts me from my purpose. To the point:
 The time, as Hamlet said, is out of joint,

And I perhaps was born to set it right;
 A fact I greet with perfect equanimity;
 I do not put it down to "cursed spite":
 I don't see any cause for cursing in it: I
 Have always taken very great delight
 In such pursuits since first I read divinity:
 Whoever will may write a nation's songs
 As long as I'm allowed to right its wrongs.



What's Eton but a nursery of wrong-righters,
A mighty mother of effective men,
A training-ground for amateur reciters,
A sharpener of the sword as of the pen,
A factory of orators and fighters,
A forcing-house of genius? Now and then,
The world at large shrinks back, abashed and beaten,
Unable to endure the glare of Eton.

I think I said I knew a man: what then?
I don't suppose such knowledge is forbid:
We nearly all do, more or less, know men,—
Or think we do: nor will a man get rid
Of that delusion, while he wields a pen:
But who this man was, what, if aught, he did,
Nor why I mentioned him, I do not know:
Nor what I "wished to say" a while ago.

VII. *Of A. H. C.*

THE LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY.

O ye musical nine, who drink the Castalian waters,
 Seated on peaks of Olympus (or, if ye prefer it,
 Olumpos,—
 Browning's a far better judge of the matter than
 yours very truly—),
 Pray be so good as to give me assistance,—for,
 tho' I'm a poet,
 I should be glad to receive a certain amount of
 assistance—,
 Give me your help while I sing how SMITH, on the
 4th of December,
 Did us the honour to read a paper entitled
 "Pompeii,"
 In a Society whose name defies the restriction of
 metre.

Scarce need we tell of his fervour, research,
 erudition and learning,
 These we must all have observed for ourselves, or at
 all events heard of,
 Heard of from President PASHLEY, our eloquent
 President PASHLEY

—Please to observe the effect of a skilfully cooked
 repetition,
 Copied from Homer and Clough and a host of
 hexameter heroes ;
 Nor will we trouble our readers with all the parti-
 culars,—pictures,
 Writings on walls and the like: but this we will
 say, that Sir Walter,
 G. P. R. James and Lord Lytton must yield him
 the palm in description.
 When he described how a skeleton dove had been
 found at Pompeii,
 Found on a skeleton egg, we all of us wept in a
 chorus.

When he had done, and the weepers had wept,
 and the stamping was over,
 PASHLEY arose, and he made some remarks in the
 usual fashion ;
 “This was an excellent paper, he seldom had heard
 such a good one,
 “Yet there was one little thing he should like to
 make just one remark on,
 “One little point where he did not agree with the
 reader’s opinion,
 “One little question on which Mr SMITH should
 have scarcely been silent” :
 Several more little points, and several more little
 questions,

Several more little things and so on and so on
 and so on ;
 Not that I wish to deny that his speech was ex-
 ceedingly clever,
 Or that we all of us paid him the greatest and
 deepest attention.
 He was immediately followed by TATHAM (N.B. to
 the printer ;
 Do not omit to put all proper names in capital
 letters,
 Partly because it looks well and smacks of the
 penny-a-liner,
 Partly to comfort our friends when we cannot
 afford them a Mr):
 Much information he gave concerning a building
 he'd heard of,
 Five were its doors and its size 250 x 80.
 JONES was the next to arise; and he made us a
 crushing oration,
 Crushing, but pointless withal, like a seventy-ton
 steam hammer,
 (Study that last line well, observe the onomatopoeia),
 Crushed Mr SMITH with a hint that he had not
 neglected his Bulwer.

Then Mr WAYTE held forth, and his eloquence
 vied with his learning;
 Oh for the tongue, or the pen or the pencil or
 something of some one,

Some one of fame, who was known from his youth
as a friend of the Muses,
Then I might try to depict what was really the
speech of the evening.
Now it is useless to try: we will only repeat his
suggestion ;—
If to Pompeii you go, be sure that you go on a
Sunday.

Last Mr SHUCKBURGH spoke, and his speech was
extremely delightful,
Touching on books and the like: we wish we had
time to report it.

VIII. *Of W. S.*

FOR GREEK IAMBICS.

Pe. Not so, my liege, for even now the town
 Splits with sedition, and the incensed mob
 Rush hither roaring.

Olc. Let them roar their fill,
 Bluster and bellow till the enormous wings
 Of gusty Boreas flap with less ado.
 Ask they my treacherous nephew's wretched life,
 As if that order were a thing of nought
 Which I did publish? Let them beg or threaten,
 I'll not regard them. Oh my trusty friend,
 There is no rock defies the elements,
 With half the constancy that kinglike men
 Shut up their breasts against such routs as these.

Pe. O my most valiant lord, I feel 'tis so,
 Permit me to advance against the foe.

(*Olcis and Terranea, Act IV., Sc. iii.*)

THINGS ONE WOULD RATHER HAVE
EXPRESSED DIFFERENTLY, ERRORS
OF JUDGMENT, IMPROMPTUS, &c.

To W. H.

What are the habits of the ruby flood
We reek with? man had questioned many a year:
And William Harvey spoke in accents clear
These words: "the circulation of the blood."
Man owned that this was so, and asked for food;
And fate bestowed upon him beef and beer:
But beef was coarse, indelicate and sere:
So Harvey proffered Sauce and made it good.
My friend! be worthy of thy forbears' glory,
And if old truths thou canst not rediscover,
Yet canst thou live those truths out here on earth:
Make stagnant conversations, void of mirth,
To circulate with quip and crank and story,
Make life's dull dish with piquant sauce run over.

4th July, 1882, MALINES. MIDNIGHT.

Belgian, with cumbrous tread and iron boots,
Who in the murky middle of the night,
Designing to renew the foul pursuits
In which thy life is passed, ill-favoured wight,
And wishing on the platform to alight
Where thou couldst mingle with thy fellow brutes,
Didst walk the carriage floor (a leprous sight),
As o'er the sky some baleful meteor shoots :
Upon my slippered foot thou didst descend,
Didst rouse me from my slumbers mad with pain,
And laughedst loud for several minutes' space.
Oh may'st thou suffer tortures without end :
May fiends with glowing pincers rend thy brain,
And beetles batten on thy blackened face !

BALLADE OF THE DROWNING FUSEE.

The pipe I intend to consume
Is full, and fairly alight :
It scatters a fragrant perfume,
Blue smoke-wreaths are heaving in sight
I sink on the heathery height,
And lo! there is borne unto me
From a sweet little stream on my right
The song of the drowning fusee.

The monarch of waterfowl, whom
On the brink of an infinite night
A strange irresistible doom
Converts to a musical wight,
Is akin, in his glory's despite,
To a moribund match, as we see,
While we listen, in speechless delight,
To the song of the drowning fusee.

As he sinks in his watery tomb,
His epitaph let me indite.
He hardly took up any room ;
His life was retired ; his end bright.
With destiny no one can fight
All poets and prozers agree,
And a tribute to destiny's might
Is the song of the drowning fusee.

Friend ! would you be gratified quite
The first of our poets to be ?
If so, I advise you to write
The song of the drowning fusee.

THE BALLADE OF THE INCOMPETENT
BALLADE-MONGER.

I am not ambitious at all :
 I am not a poet, I know
 (Though I do love to see a mere scrawl
 To order and symmetry grow).
 My muse is uncertain and slow,
 I am not expert with my tools,
 I lack the poetic *argot* :
 But I hope I have kept to the rules.

When your brain is undoubtedly small,
 'Tis hard, sir, to write in a row,
 Some five or six rhymes to Nepaul,
 And more than a dozen to Joe :
 The metre is easier though,
 Three rhymes are sufficient for 'ghouls,'
 My lines are deficient in go,
 But I hope I have kept to the rules.

Unable to fly let me crawl,
Your patronage kindly bestow :
I am not the author of Saul,
I am not Voltaire or Rousseau :
I am not desirous, oh no !
To rise from the ranks of the fools,
To shine with Gosse, Dobson and Co. :
But I hope I have kept to the rules.

Dear Sir, though my language is low,
Let me dip in Pierian pools :
My verses are only so so,
But I hope I have kept to the rules.

TRIOLETS OLLENDORFIENS.

Je suis le frère
 Du bon cocher :
 Où est sa mère ?
 Je suis le frère.
 Tu es le père
 Du jardinier :
 Je suis le frère
 Du bon cocher.

Où est mon canif ?
 J'ai perdu ma chatte.
 Je veux du rosbif.
 Où est mon canif ?
 J'ai tué le Juif.
 Faut-il qu'on se batte ?
 Où est mon canif ?
 J'ai perdu ma chatte.

La belle cousine
 Du fils de ma bru
 Vit dans ma cuisine,
 La belle cousine !
 Ta laide voisine
 N'a jamais connu
 La belle cousine
 Du fils de ma bru.

To D. J. S.

WRITTEN ON THE FLY-LEAF OF MACLISE'S
PORTRAIT GALLERY, EDITED BY BATES.

Here, painted by a Master's hand,
Is many a lovely dame,
Amidst the writers of the land
Who gained the greatest fame.

But sure there is not one whose pen
Was half so apt as thine
To catch the ears of listening men,
Or wake the Sacred Nine.

None saw reflected in her glass
A more distinguished face:
But thou art born too late, alas!
To take thy proper place.

The pencil of Maclise, my dear,
Thy face will ne'er portray,
Nor will the facts of thy career
Be told by Bates, B.A.

Yet do not hence a pretext seize
To blame the cruel Fates:
If they denied thee to Maclise,
They rescued thee from Bates.

THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE PHILANTHROPIST.

Searching an infinite Where,
Probing a bottomless When,
 Dreamfully wandering,
 Ceaselessly pondering,
What is the Wherefore of men :
Bartering life for a There,
Selling his soul for a Then,
 Baffling obscurity,
 Conning futurity,
Usefulest, wisest of men !

Grasping the Present of Life,
Seizing a definite Now,
 Labouring thornfully,
 Banishing scornfully
Doubts of his Whither and How :
Spending his substance in Strife,
Working a practical How,
 Letting obscurity
 Rest on futurity,
Usefuler, wiser, I trow.

TO A FRIEND.

Whene'er I wander through the well-known fields,
Or guide my boat down the familiar stream,
And taste the joys which recollection yields,
When youth's delights are but a fading dream,
Where Windsor's keep his hoary head doth lift,
I'll think upon your gift.

And when you have occasion to refer
To Mr Browning's justly famous verses,
A thing which may from time to time occur,
To save one's giving vent to tears and curses,
(Although you may not catch the poet's drift)
You'll think upon my gift.

A THOUGHT.


If all the harm that women have done
Were put in a bundle and rolled into one,
 Earth would not hold it,
 The sky could not enfold it,
It could not be lighted nor warmed by the sun ;
 Such masses of evil
 Would puzzle the devil
And keep him in fuel while Time's wheels run.

But if all the harm that's been done by men
Were doubled and doubled and doubled again,
And melted and fused into vapour and then
Were squared and raised to the power of ten,
There wouldn't be nearly enough, not near,
To keep a small girl for the tenth of a year.

EARLY SCHOOL.

If there is a vile, pernicious,
 Wicked and degraded rule,
Tending to debase the vicious,
 And corrupt the harmless fool ;
If there is a hateful habit
 Making man a senseless tool,
With the feelings of a rabbit,
 And the wisdom of a mule :
It's the rule which inculcates,
It's the habit which dictates,
The wrong and sinful practice of going into school.

If there's anything improving
 To an erring sinner's state,
Which is useful in removing
 All the ills of human fate :
If there's any glorious custom
 Which our faults can dissipate,
And can casually thrust 'em
 Out of sight, and make us great :
It's the plan by which we shirk
Half our matutinal work,
The glorious institution of always being late.



AN ELECTION ADDRESS.

(To Cambridge University, 1882.)

I venture to suggest that I
Am rather noticeably fit
To hold the seat illumined by
The names of Palmerston and Pitt.

My principles are such as you
Have often heard expressed before :
They are, without exception, true ;
And who can say, with candour, more ?

My views concerning Church and State
Are such as Bishops have professed :
I need not recapitulate
The arguments on which they rest.

Respecting Ireland, I opine
That Ministers are in a mess,
That Landlords rule by Right Divine,
That Firmness will remove Distress.

I see with horror undisguised
That freedom of debate is dead :
The Liberals are organised :
The Caucus rears its hideous head.

Yet need'st thou, England, not despair
At Chamberlain's or Gladstone's pride,
While Henry Cecil Raikes is there
To organise the other side.

I never quit, as others do,
Political intrigue, to seek
The dingy literary crew,
Or hear the voice of science speak.

But I have fostered, guided, planned
Commercial enterprise: in me
Some ten or twelve directors and
Six worthy chairmen you may see.

My academical career
Was free from any sort of blot:
I challenge anybody here
To demonstrate that it was not.

At classics too I worked amain,
Whereby I did not only pass,
But even managed to obtain
A very decent second class.

And since those early days, the same
Success has crowned the self-same plan;
Profundity I cannot claim:
Respectability I can.

NOVI LAPSUS.

APRIL—JUNE, 1891.

DE LAPSIBUS PRIORIBUS.

TWO ROUNDELS.

I. THE POET'S PRAYER.

To buy my book—if you will be so kind—
 Is all I ask of you; and not to look
 What fruit lies hid beneath the azure rind:
 To *buy* my book.

This for her hymn-book *Rosalind* mistook,
 When worshipping with yokel, maid, and hind;
Neaera read it in a flowery nook,
 And gave her loose curls to the wanton wind.
 For this her grammar *Sylvia* once forsook,
 Of you I only ask—you will not mind?—
 To *buy* my book.

2. TO AN INDISCREET CRITIC.

As J. K. S. I made my bid for fame
And money, which is sweeter than success,
Though Mr —— is possibly the same
as J. K. S.

Was it perhaps an *error of the press*?
Is some malign *compositor* to blame?
Or was it just the *reader's* carelessness?
Or your astute *reviewer's* little game,—
His *lapsus calami* as I should guess?
In any case I wish to sign my name
as J. K. S.

FROM THREE FLY LEAVES.


I. To P. L., AGED $4\frac{1}{2}$.

Ah Phyllis! did I only dare
To hope that, as the years go by,
And you, a maid divinely fair,
The cynosure of every eye,
Have fixed the wandering minds of men,
And found a fare for scores of hearses,
You still will open, now and then,
My little book of verses;

Or did I, bolder yet, aspire
To hope that any phrase of mine,
Aglow with memory's cheering fire
Will burn within that heart of thine;
Although my brow be bare of bays,
My coffers not replete with gain,
I shall not—what's the foolish phrase?—
Have written quite in vain.

2. To B. C.

J'espère bien vous trouver toute prête
À recevoir mes *Lapsus Calami* ;
Si ce n'est pas l'ouvrage d'un poète
Prenez au moins l'hommage d'un ami.



3. To R. C. B.

Optime lectorum, necnon praeclare poeta,
Hos vacuos versus scripsit amica manus :
Musa mea est, fateor, laudum vix digna tuarum,
Sed mea digna tuae laudis amicitia est.

THE RETORT COURTEOUS.

I. ENGLAND AND AMERICA.

I. ON A RHINE STEAMER.

Republic of the West,
Enlightened, free, sublime,
Unquestionably best
Production of our time.

The telephone is thine,
And thine the Pullman Car,
The caucus, the divine
Intense electric star.

To thee we likewise owe
The venerable names
Of Edgar Allan Poe,
And Mr Henry James.

In short it's due to thee,
Thou kind of Western star,
That we have come to be
Precisely what we are.

But every now and then,
It cannot be denied,
You breed a kind of men
Who are not dignified,

Or courteous or refined,
Benevolent or wise,
Or gifted with a mind
Beyond the common size,

Or notable for tact,
Agreeable to me,
Or anything, in fact,
That people ought to be.



2. ON A PARISIAN BOULEVARD.

Britannia rules the waves,
 As I have heard her say;
 She frees whatever slaves
 She meets upon her way.

A teeming mother she
 Of Parliaments and Laws;
 Majestic, mighty, free:
 Devoid of common flaws.

For her did Shakspeare write
 His admirable plays:
 For her did Nelson fight
 And Wolseley win his bays.

Her sturdy common sense
 Is based on solid grounds:
 By saving numerous pence
 She spends effective pounds.

The Saxon and the Celt
 She equitably rules;
 Her iron rod is felt
 By countless knaves and fools.


In fact, mankind at large,
Black, yellow, white and red,
Is given to her in charge,
And owns her as a head.

But every here and there—
Deny it if you can—
She breeds a vacant stare
Unworthy of a man :

A look of dull surprise ;
A nerveless idle hand :
An eye which never tries
To threaten or command :

In short, a kind of man,
If man indeed he be,
As worthy of our ban
As any that we see :

Unspeakably obtuse,
Abominably vain,
Of very little use,
And execrably plain.



II. MEN AND WOMEN.

I. IN THE BACKS.

As I was strolling lonely in the Backs,
I met a woman whom I did not like.
I did not like the way the woman walked :
Loose-hipped, big-boned, disjointed, angular.
If her anatomy comprised a waist,
I did not notice it : she had a face
With eyes and lips adjusted thereunto,
But round her mouth no pleasing shadows stirred,
Nor did her eyes invite a second glance.
Her dress was absolutely colourless,
Devoid of taste or shape or character ;
Her boots were rather old, and rather large,
And rather shabby, not precisely matched.
Her hair was very far from beautiful
And not abundant : she had such a hat
As neither merits nor expects remark.
She was not clever, I am very sure,

Nor witty nor amusing : well-informed
She may have been, and kind, perhaps, of heart ;
But gossip was writ plain upon her face.
And so she stalked her dull unthinking way ;
Or, if she thought of anything, it was
That such a one had got a second class,
Or Mrs So-and-So a second child.
I do not want to see that girl again :
I did not like her : and I should not mind
If she were done away with, killed, or ploughed.
She did not seem to serve a useful end :
And certainly she was not beautiful.


2. ON THE KING'S PARADE.

As I was waiting for the tardy tram,
 I met what purported to be a man.
 What seemed to pass for its material frame,
 The semblance of a suit of clothes had on,
 Fit emblem of the grand sartorial art
 And worthy of a more sublime abode.
 Its coat and waistcoat were of weird design
 Adapted to the fashion's latest whim.
 I think it wore an Athenæum tie.
 White flannels draped its too ethereal limbs
 And in its vacant eye there glared a glass.

In vain for this poor derelict of flesh,
 Void of the spirit it was built to house,
 Have classic poets tuned their deathless lyre,
 Astute historians fingered mouldering sheets
 And reared a palace of sententious truth.
 In vain has y been added unto x ,

In vain the mighty decimal unrolled,
 Which strives indefinitely to be π .
 In vain the palpitating frog has groaned
 Beneath the licensed knife: in vain for this
 The surreptitious corpse been disinterred
 And forced, amid the disinfectant fumes,
 To yield its secrets to philosophy.
 In vain the stress and storm of politics
 Beat round this empty head: in vain the priest
 Pronounces loud anathemas: the fool
 In vain remarks upon the fact that God
 Is missing in the world of his belief.
 Vain are the problems whether space, or time,
 Or force, or matter can be said to be:
 Vain are the mysteries of Melchisedec,
 And vain Methuselah's unusual years.

It had a landlady I make no doubt;
 A friend or two as vacant as itself;
 A kitchen-bill; a thousand cigarettes;
 A dog which knew it for the fool it was.
 Perhaps it was a member of the Union,
 Who votes as often as he does not speak,
 And "recommends" as wildly as he spells.
 Its income was as much beyond its merits
 As less than its inane expenditure.
 Its conversation stood to common sense
 As stands the *Sporting Times* (its favourite print)
 To wit or humour. It was seldom drunk,
 But seldom sober when it went to bed.



The mean contents of these superior clothes
 Are they but duly trained by careful hands,
 And castigated with remorseless zeal,
 And endowed with purpose, gifted with a mind,
 And taught to work, or play, or talk, or laugh,
 Might possibly aspire—I do not know—
 To pass, in time, for what they dare to scorn,
 An ordinary undergraduate.

What did this thing crawling 'twixt heaven and earth,
 Amid the network of our grimy streets?
 What end was it intended to subserve,
 What lowly mission fashioned to neglect?
 It did not seem to wish for a degree,
 And what its object was I do not know,
 Unless it was to catch the tardy tram.

RESCUED FROM THE WASTE
PAPER BASKET.

PARKER'S PIECE, *May 19, 1891.*

To see good *Tennis* ! what diviner joy
 Can fill our leisure, or our minds employ?
 Not *Sylvia's* self is more supremely fair,
 Than balls that hurtle through the conscious air.
 Not *Stella's* form instinct with truer grace
 Than *Lambert's* racket poised to win the *chase*.
 Not *Chloe's* harp more native to the ear,
 Than the tense strings which smite the flying sphere.

When *Lambert boasts* the superhuman *force*,
 Or splits the echoing *grille* without remorse:
 When *Harradine*, as graceful as of yore,
 Wins *better than a yard*, upon the floor;
 When *Alfred's* ringing cheer proclaims success,
 Or *Saunders volleys* in resistlessness;
 When *Heathcote's service* makes the *dedans* ring
 With just applause, and own its honoured king;
 When *Pettitt's* prowess all our zeal awoke
 Till high Olympus shuddered at the stroke;
 Or, when, receiving *thirty and the floor*,
 The novice *serves* a dozen *faults* or more;

Or some plump don, perspiring and profane,
 Assails the roof and breaks the exalted pane;
 When *vantage, five games all, the door* is called,
 And Europe pauses, breathless and appalled,
 Till lo! the ball by cunning hand caressed
 Finds in the *winning gallery* a nest;
 These are the moments, this the bliss supreme,
 Which makes the artist's joy, the poet's dream.

Let *cricketers* await the tardy sun,
 Break one another's shins and call it fun;
 Let *Scotia's golfers* through the affrighted land
 With crooked knee and glaring eye-ball stand;
 Let *football* rowdies show their straining thews,
 And tell their triumphs to a mud-stained Muse;
 Let *india-rubber* pellets dance on *grass*
 Where female arts the ruder sex surpass;
 Let other people play at other things;
 The *king of games* is still the *game of kings*.



THE STREET ORGANS BILL, 1891.

Grinder, who serenely grindest,
As thou groundest ages back,
Till thou ultimately findest
Legislators on thy track :

Grinder, there is one Jacoby,
There is Lubbock, prince of Barts,
Sternest of Professors : oh be-
Ware of his infernal arts.

Guyer Hunter backed it boldly,
Backed the Bart's oppressive bill :
So did he whose name is Staveley,
And whose other name is Hill.

If they pass their cruel measure,
If the House is true to them,
You must never give us pleasure,
Grinder, after 8 p.m.

When the dawn with rosy finger,
Dissipates the eastern gloom,
You and your machine must linger
Silent in your silent room.

Grinder, if you are not willing,
When invited, to desist,
You must pay your fortieth shilling,
Wretched instrumentalist !

Failing that,—a fate unkind—
You must languish in a gaol
One laborious fortnight: grinder,
Pray, oh pray that they may fail.



ODE ON THE 450TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
AT ETON.

Think of a number: double it
(If that does not surpass thy wit);
Subtract a dozen: add a score:
Divide by twenty: multiply
By twice the cube of $x+y$,
And half again as many more:
Then take the twenty-seventh root
And logarithmic sine to boot,
And if the answer does not show
Just nine times fifty, make it so.

There's something more than half divine
In fifty multiplied by nine:
And never integer has been
So grand as thirty times fifteen:
The total I could doubtless praise
In many other striking ways:
But this at least is very plain,—
The same will never come again.

Then make an exhibition please
And summon guests from far and wide:
And marry mystic melodies
To odes instinct with proper pride.
Invoke the Founder's mighty name,
And boast of Gray's and Shelley's fame:
For this is very sure: that we
Who missed the latest jubilee
Shall not improbably be vexed
By missing equally the next.

Then let us resolutely strive
This mighty fact to keep alive
That 5 times 9 is 45;
And furthermore the truth to fix
(In their behoof whose course will run
In June of 1981)
That 54 is 9 times 6.

STEAM-LAUNCHES ON THE THAMES.

Henley, June 7, 1891.


Shall we, to whom the stream by right belongs,
Who travel silent, save, perchance, for songs;
Whose track's a ripple,—leaves the Thames a lake,
Nor frights the swan—scarce makes the rushes shake;
Who harmonize, exemplify, complete
And vivify a scene already sweet:
Who travel careless on, from lock to lock,
Oblivious that the world contains a clock,
With pace commensurate to our desires,
Propelled by other force than Stygian fire's;
Shall we be driven hence to leave a place
For these, who bring upon our stream disgrace:
The rush, the roar, the stench, the smoke, the steam,
The nightmare striking through our heavenly dream;
The scream as shrill and hateful to the ear
As when a peacock vents his rage and fear;
Which churn to fury all a glassy reach,
And heave rude breakers on a pebbly beach:
Which half o'erwhelm with waves our frailer craft,
While graceless shop-boys chuckle fore and aft:
Foul water-toadstools, noisome filth-stained shapes,
Fit only to be manned by dogs and apes:
Blots upon nature: scars that mar her smile:
Obscene, obtrusive, execrable, vile?

To B. H. H.

(On his travels).

And will thy travels never end?
And wilt thou not return, my friend?
Shall Piccadilly never more,
Amid the busses' daily roar,
Where prowls the Baron's stately goat,
Thy philosophic footfall note?
Nor ever will the Savile's board
The dainties of the hour afford
To one grave form amid the Babel
Which girds that lofty-minded table?


Come: for we miss thee. That slow smile
Has failed us now too long a while:
That network of ingenious phrase
Suggesting more than what it says:
The literary epigram
Which gracefully unmasks a sham,
Or else awards judicious praise
To one who earns but wears not bays,
Are lacking in our midst, and we
Drift, rudderless, about a sea
Of conversation unadorned
By him whose absence long we've mourned.



Come: for *I* need you: more or less
Because I love to play at chess;
Partly because I want to know
Your views about a book or so,
Which I have published, or intend
To publish: most of all, my friend,
Because I found thy converse sweet,
Thy fellowship a joy complete,
And life is short and art is long,
And still the absent suffer wrong.

I know not where thy footsteps stray,
Nor what the ordering of thy day:
If now thy graceful shallop slips
Amid the gorgeous Eastern ships,
Where some vast river makes a lane
Across the forest-hidden plain:
If, stretched upon a soft divan,
You lounge, as orientals can,
And trace the rings of fragrant smoke
One graceful moment soar unbroke;
While, lo, the wordless Kitmagar
Presents the welcome waterjar,
And swart Chuprassis stand at ease,
Beneath umbrageous banyan trees:
If now perchance the crescent moon
Hangs high, at night's reposeful noon,
Against a gloomy purple sky,
Star-studded in its majesty,
While slow you walk alone, and deep
In thoughts that bring more rest than sleep.

Come, anyhow: if not to find
An occupation to thy mind,
Nor yet a Fortunatus' purse,
Nor any cure for any curse:
Come, talk, live, marry, work, write, sing;
Be eloquent on anything:
Be active in whatever line:
And if a sun less splendid shine,
And vegetation less profuse,
And persons worthier of abuse,
Are found with us than now with you;
Still, though our merits may be few,
We are at least thy friends of youth,
Thy fellow-seekers after truth,
Thy fellow-talkers, fellow-bards,
Thy fellows still in all regards;
So turn again towards the West,
And grasp their hands who love you best.



TO MRS B.

The sumptuous board of you know who
 Was rich with unaccustomed splendour:
 The host, a gallant man and true,
 Beamed like a newly polished fender:
 And more than one important guest
 With visible delight was swelling:
 But that which I remember best
 Is just a phrase :—"How's Helen?"

I sat, a melancholy man,
 Beside a newly-married lady,
 And wondered how, if I began,
 To shun the trivial, dull and shady;
 When through the dinner-din I caught
 A question I remember well, in
 My hours of retrospective thought:
 My neighbour said :—"How's Helen?"

I do not know how Helen was:
 —She's almost always doing fairly—:
 Nor do I greatly care, because
 The question, which was asked so squarely,
 Produced an excellent effect
 Both then and since: it's truth I'm telling;
 And that is why I recollect
 The simple phrase: "How's Helen?"


A PARODIST'S APOLOGY.

If I've dared to laugh at you, Robert Browning,
 'Tis with eyes that with you have often wept :
You have oftener left me smiling or frowning,
 Than any beside, one bard except.

But once you spoke to me, storm-tongued poet,
 A trivial word in an idle hour ;
But thrice I looked on your face and the glow it
 Bore from the flame of the inward power.

But you'd many a friend you never knew of,
 Your words lie hid in a hundred hearts,
And thousands of hands that you've grasped but
 few of
 Would be raised to shield you from slander's darts.

For you lived in the sight of the land that owned
 you,
 You faced the trial, and stood the test :
They have piled you a cairn that would fain have
 stoned you :
 You have spoken your message and earned your
 rest.



A SONNET.

Two voices are there : one is of the deep ;
It learns the storm-cloud's thunderous melody,
Now roars, now murmurs with the changing sea,
Now bird-like pipes, now closes soft in sleep :
And one is of an old half-witted sheep
Which bleats articulate monotony,
And indicates that two and one are three,
That grass is green, lakes damp, and mountains
steep :
And, Wordsworth, both are thine : at certain times
Forth from the heart of thy melodious rhymes,
The form and pressure of high thoughts will burst :
At other times—good Lord ! I'd rather be
Quite unacquainted with the A. B. C.
Than write such hopeless rubbish as thy worst.

TO A LADY.

A pipe's a merry madrigal,
 A stately sonnet a cigar,
 The homely clay at close of day
 A stanza to the evening star,
 The cigarette a canzonette
 Both amorous and musical.

But as the song requires an air,
 A madrigal must aptly rhyme,
 A sonnet shines in measured lines,
 Each foot must walk in proper time,
 And music's aid is best displayed
 When duly matched with verses fair:

So sweetest meerschaum needs a case,
 Cigars are clipped with dainty blade,
 The seasoned briar will still aspire
 To lights in silvern casket laid,
 The cigarette is duly set
 In holder rich with every grace.

And every cigarette consumed
 Is fragrant homage offered thee;
 The mellow streak, from week to week,
 Embrowns thy gift bestowed on me:—
 So every hour proclaims the power
 Of her whose gift the smoke perfumed.



REGRETS.

A Roundel.

You would not hear me speak; you never knew,
Will never know, the eloquence unique
It was my purpose to bestow on you;
You would not hear me speak.

Dear! it was no caprice, or idle freak:
Perhaps I did not even mean to woo:
My meaning was not very far to seek:
I might have gained the end I had in view;
I might have failed, since words are often weak;
It never can be settled now: adieu!
You would not hear me speak.

JUNE 19, 1891.

All in a peaceful garden fair,
One night in leafy June,
There sat a wondrous lovely pair,
And waited for the Moon,


In silence, save where rustled by
A little creeping breeze,
Which swept the cobwebs from the sky,
And scarcely stirred the trees.

The one displayed in form and face
To all and sundry comers
The sweet accumulated grace
Of twenty happy summers.

The other, matronly and calm,
Was most divinely fair,
And each was stately as a palm,
And each had pale gold hair.

Between them, where a trailing bough
Obscured the moonlight pale,
Lounged a vast form with classic brow,
Unquestionably male.

There rose a mighty yellow Moon,
Across the tree-tops peering
Along the fleecy sky of June,
Through which she'll soon be steering



And when she saw each lovely maid
 She clapped her silver hands ;
 "Such wondrous charms are rare" she said
 "In all sublunar lands.

"But which is fairest?" long and loud
 She shouted to the stars,
 Which glittered in a golden crowd,
 Like newly lit cigars.

Then from the zenith *Vega* slid,
 And red *Aldebaran*
 Rushed up the sky, as he was bid,
 To meet the stately *Swan* ;

And many dozen more appeared,
 Till all the sky was bare,
 And round the Satellite careered,
 And vowed the scene was fair.

Then spake the Moon : "I'm sore distressed :

"Two beauteous forms I see :

"I can't say which I like the best :

"Decide the point for me.

"Such foolish puzzles, I declare,

"I hold in much abhorrence :

"Say if the lovelier of the pair

"Be A—— or F——."

Then peeping o'er each other's head,

The striking scene to scan,

The Stars unanimously said :—

"We much prefer the Man."

To A. H. C.

*(In recollection of certain debates on the futility of
Metaphysics.)*

You taunt me as a shallow man :
 You mock my prosy middle age :
 Would demonstrate me, if you can,
 Devoid of youth's exalted rage
 Bound on a dusty pilgrimage.

Because I do not much peruse
 The words that Schopenhauer penned ;
 Locke's, Kant's and Hegel's lofty views
 I don't aspire to comprehend ;
 Because, in short, my worthy friend,

I'm, like yourself, a man of prose :
 A man of commonplace belief,
 Who doubts, and disbelieves, and knows,
 And aims at joy, and flies from grief,
 And has a taste for beer and beef.

You do us wrong : for you and I
 Are just as good as other men :
 A hand to write, a seeing eye,
 An ear which catches, now and then,
 The sounds that haunt a poet's pen :

I offer (you withhold them) thanks
 For these, and other common things:
 And not in vain on Cam's green banks
 We lived at Trinity and King's,
 And loved to try our sprouting wings.

A many-windowed house is life,
 And out of every window we,
 In intervals of daily strife,
 Look forth upon infinity:
 And that's the good of you and me.

The joys of metaphysic trance,
 The midnight bliss of keen debate,
 The insight of a mystic's glance,
 Which charm the undergraduate,
 Are matched in our maturer state.

The deeds and passions of our prime,
 Our studies of acknowledged truth,
 Our business—though it's not sublime,—
 Are just as excellent in sooth,
 As all the fervour lost with youth.

The ruddy warmth of arduous toil,
 The spasm of triumphant strife,
 A friend to serve, a foe to foil,
 A cause with noble purpose rife,
 The love of her that gave thee life:

The smile that shines through misty tears,
 The soft "delight of low replies,"

The after-glow of vanished fears,
And all the excellent surprise
That trembles in a woman's eyes :

Men, women, children : speech and song :
The artist's touch, the poet's thought :
The pulses of a busy throng,
The rest of spirits over-wrought :
Are these—is all beside them, naught ?

Here, everywhere, and every day,
The seeker finds right human stuff :
To laugh, to weep, to work, to play ;
Are joy and sorrow not enough ?
And cannot these content thee, Clough ?

TO MY READERS.

I do not boast a poet's bays,
 Nor claim to wield a poet's pen,
 Nor do I hope for many days
 To buzz about the mouths of men.

I claim to be the sort of man
 Who studies metrical effect :
 Whose verses generally scan :
 Whose rhymes are commonly correct ;

And when I chance upon a thought
 Which seems to shape itself in rhyme,
 I like to treat it as I ought,
 Unless the theme be too sublime.

It may be pleasure to rehearse,
 When twilight deepens out of day,
 The tinkle of a tiny verse
 Which wiled the noon-tide hours away.

It may be pleasure to recall
 The friends of yesterday to-morrow
 But that's a pleasure—if at all—
 Which borders very near on sorrow.

So, if I try to make you laugh,
Or if I chance to make you weep,
Your comrade when you crunch and quaff,
Your solace when you cannot sleep.

Its merely as a common man
Who says what other people say,
And hopes to end as he began,
A treader of the beaten way.

June, 1891.



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